

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Gloria K. Rogers

COLLECTION: 4700.2574

IDENTIFICATION: English teacher at Mossville High School from 1955-1969

INTERVIEWER: Chelsea Arseneault

SERIES: Mossville History Project - Oral History Day & Field Interviews

INTERVIEW DATES: September 24, 2015; October 1, 2015

FOCUS DATES: 1960s-1980s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4517, Session I

Gloria Kilgore Rogers born in Shreveport, Louisiana on April 8th, 1934 to parents Kora Willis and Robert Kilgore; description of childhood home in Arcadia, Louisiana; mother's wish for her and her brother to stay together; raised by grandmother when mother passed on May 1st, 1950; upon high school graduation, attended college and brother joined the United States Navy; first job teaching English at Mossville High School; taught there from when it first opened in 1955 to when it was changed to a junior high in 1969; transferred to Westlake High School because schools trying to meet federal guidelines for integration; reception from faculty at Westlake High; some receptive, others treated her as though she was unwelcome; notified by telegram that she was being transferred from Westlake High School to Barbe High School; explains to school board despite initial hesitations, she has grown to like Westlake; she doesn't have much choice in the matter, since she needs a job; given a tour of the school, and she begins to like it there; reflections on her time at Westlake and her first days teaching at Barbe; students testing her boundaries; Mossville the only black school in the area when she first arrived there; thoughts on bussing; interviewer schedules follow-up.

T4530, Session II

Mossville was first school where she taught; curiosity of students because she was so young; younger than some of her students, because they hadn't had the chance to attend school; some rode the bus to Lake Charles to attend Washington High School, but it was inconvenient; circumstances improved after Mossville High School built; bussing; attitudes of students; most wanted to learn, some needed additional help but were embarrassed to ask; she wanted her students to be prepared for realities of life; anecdotes and quotes she would share with her classes, such as "in life, there is the balancing"; as a surprise gift, former students had her portrait painted; pride in her students' accomplishments; former students enjoy talking with her about what went on in the classroom; when she retired from Barbe High School, she worked at an Adult Education center called P.M. High School; pride in what she was able to accomplish with

these students, like one student who learned to read and became a minister; how she got the job at Mossville High School; when she applied to teach in Calcasieu Parish, she wasn't even aware Mossville existed; cousin helped her find residence with a woman who lived in the area; later, she moved into an apartment in the Bel Air subdivision of Mossville; becoming a part of Mt. Zion Baptist Church; community members would give her rides to church and into town; saved up to buy her first car, a Ford Fairlane 500, which students later vandalized; called the police on students, and later learned the community liked to handle grievances internally; difficulties with integration caused her to question her work; black students upset because they did not have the same opportunities at Westlake High as they did at Mossville High; classroom procedures; feeling sorry for the principal at Westlake; transferred to Barbe High School after teaching at Westlake for three or four years; students at Barbe tried to intimidate her by telling her they ran another teacher off, but she set them straight; students used to tease her about her car and ask her all sorts of questions; husband didn't understand why she kept attending Mt. Zion Baptist Church, but to her, that's home; thoughts on life, such as learning to adapt to your environment; the older she gets, the more she becomes absorbed "in God's way of life."

TAPES: 2 (4517, 4530)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 84 minutes (1 hour, 24 minutes)

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 40 total
T4517 (Session I) 12 pages
T4530 (Session II) 28 pages

PHOTOGRAPHS / PHOTOGRAPHER: One photograph of Rogers taken at the Rigmaiden Recreation Center during a Mossville Oral History Day event. Photographer Kyle Tanglao.

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence; Interview questions (7 pgs)

RESTRICTIONS: none